

Bartlett Yancey, Esq.

From Archibald D. Murphey.

Hillsborough, 8 Dec., 1823.

Dear Yancey:

For several years past I have been projecting a work on North Carolina, to embrace her History, Views of her Climate, Soil. Literature, Legislation, Manners, etc., etc. I have collected Materials for two Volumes of the Work. It was my Wish to prepare a Work which would reflect some Honour on the State, and to preserve from Oblivion Facts in Our History that would be interesting to Our Posterity. Such a Work will fill five or six Volumes. It was my Wish to ornament the Work with Portraits of our most eminent Men, if they could be procured, and with Maps of the State, of several of the Counties, etc. After a Correspondence with Booksellers, I find that they are of Opinion, little or no Profit is to be expected from a Voluminous Work, the Fashion and Taste of the Times being for Compilations, Epitome, and Abridgements. And as to a Catchpenny production, it would do no Honour either to the State or the Writer, and it could not embody that Information which, if it be worthy of being preserved, must now be done, or it will be entirely lost.

I am too poor to encounter the expense and lose the Time which would be required either to collect the Materials or arrange

them. I should have to purchase the Materials in the hands of Francis X. Martin,¹ travel over the State once or twice, go to Kentucky and spend several Months with Governor Shelby,² and probably go to other States to see other Men. I should have to spend at least a Year in Raleigh examining the public Records and making extracts from them. The probable expense, including the Purchase of Materials, would exceed three thousand Dollars. I must necessarily curtail my Practice and have time to devote to this Pursuit.

Will the State aid me in this Work? It will be a National one, and I could not expect much aid from Individuals. As I have at all times unbosomed myself to you freely and confidentially, I will Submit to you the following propositions and leave the Subject to your Discretion. I will prosecute this Work with diligence and complete it, if the State will

1. lend me \$10,000. for eight or ten years, free from Interest, the Payment to be secured by a mortgage of real estate.
2. pay the expense of engraving the Portraits, Maps, etc.
3. Give me access to the Public Records.

I have addressed a Letter to my Friend Mr. A. Moran on this Subject, and if you feel any Interest in it, I beg you to confer with him, and determine upon the Course which should be pursued. The Money and time which I have heretofore spent in the public Service, have contributed in a considerable degree to

my ruin, and Prudence forbids my again embarking in it without a Certainty that I would not Sustain a Loss. As to making a Profit from it, I would not expect it.

Yours truly and affectionately,

A. D. MURPHY.

B. Yancey, Esq.

(Enclosure)

Whereas it is desirable that the History of North Carolina should be written and published in a style becoming the Character of the State; and Whereas without the Patronage and aid of the General Assembly Such a Work cannot be expected,

Resolved, that the Speakers of the two Houses of this General Assembly be and they are hereby requested and authorized to contract on behalf of the State with a suitable Person to write and publish the History of North Carolina; and to draw on the Treasurer for Such Money as may be necessary to carry this Resolution into effect; and their Draft shall be a Voucher for him in the Settlement of his accounts.

*Francis Xavier Martin, the historian. He was a native of France, but lived in New Bern for many years. Jefferson made him a judge of the Mississippi Territory and in 1815 he became a justice of the supreme court of Louisiana. He died in 1842. He was a legal writer of note and was also the author of a history of North Carolina.

*Isaac M. Shelby was a native of Maryland. At the time of this letter he had reached an advanced age after a life very full of honor and achievement. He served in the legislatures of Virginia and North Carolina, was one of the commanders at King's Mountain and was presented with a sword by the State of North Carolina for his part there. He helped to draw up the constitution of Kentucky and was its first governor in 1792. He was again elected in 1812. He was a soldier in the war of 1812 and was granted a medal by Congress for his services. He refused a place in the cabinet under President Monroe. He died in 1826.

Archibald D. Murphey, of Orange, reporter of the Supreme Court.